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MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan  
Lead Assistant Division Chief for Censuses  
Field Division

Attention: Management Training Branch  
Field Division

From: Howard Hogan *Howard Hogan*  
Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Prepared by: Jennifer W. Reichert  
Chief, Quality Assurance Staff  
Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Subject: Trip Report to Palm Springs, California and Opelousas, Louisiana  
for Coverage Improvement Followup Dependent Quality  
Assurance Observation

I. INTRODUCTION

I had the opportunity to visit the Palm Springs Local Census Office (LCO) under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Regional Census Center (RCC) and the Opelousas LCO under the jurisdiction of the Dallas RCC. I was in Palm Springs from July 11, 2000 until July 12, 2000 and in Opelousas from July 13, 2000 until July 14, 2000. I went to observe the Dependent Quality Assurance (QA) component of the Coverage Improvement Followup (CIFU) operation.

During the CIFU operation, enumerators visit each unit designated for followup, determine the occupancy status of the unit on census day, and complete the questionnaire accordingly. Crew Leaders or Crew Leader Assistants perform a Dependent QA to verify the status of vacant/delete units from the Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) operation and units that are contacted for the first time during CIFU.

II. PALM SPRINGS LCO

I spent the first morning of my visit to Palm Springs talking with the LCO Manager (LCOM) and the Assistant Manager for Field Operations (AMFO). Both the LCOM and the AMFO thought the CIFU operation was going very smoothly. More smoothly, in fact, than any previous operation. Their CIFU workforce consisted of 48 Crew Leaders (CLs) with one Crew Leader Assistant (CLA) and eight enumerators per CL. This LCO was able to maintain enough of their staff from NRFU that they didn't need to do any

additional hiring for CIFU. The LCOM stressed the quality of the staff they hired and the low level of turnover since the beginning of their census operations.

The LCOM and AMFO did have a couple of complaints regarding the CIFU operation. They felt the CIFU kits should have contained more Forms D-951, CIFU Dependent Review form. They found themselves short of these forms and were forced to use photocopies. Also, the CIFU procedures stated that the LCO was supposed to ensure that enumerators from NRFU didn't work in the same assignment areas (AAs) during CIFU. The LCOM indicated to me that the geography of the AAs in their LCO had changed between NRFU and CIFU so there was no way to guarantee that some enumerators wouldn't work the same units.

While speaking to the LCOM and AMFO, I discovered that this particular LCO misunderstood one aspect of the procedures for the Dependent QA operation. They interpreted the procedures such that they thought they were supposed to perform the QA check on vacant/delete cases for two full weeks or until they had checked 50 cases, whichever came first. The correct procedures were that the LCOs were supposed to perform the QA checks for two full weeks and then determine the number of cases checked. If they had checked the **minimum** of 50 cases, they could tally the results and make their pass/fail decision. If they hadn't reached the minimum at the end of two weeks, they were supposed to continue until they had checked 50 cases.

### III. PALM SPRINGS DEPENDENT QA OBSERVATION

Before going out with the CLA to observe the Dependent QA, I had the opportunity to speak with the Field Operations Supervisor (FOS) for the district in which I was to observe. He wanted to make me aware of one of his concerns regarding the NRFU operation. He indicated that he was forced to complete his NRFU work two weeks early. He was referring to the final attempt procedures that the LCO implemented once they had reached 95 percent completion. He felt that the early completion would result in a significant amount of undercount in his district.

The CLA and I visited five housing units. The first unit was not actually a Dependent QA check. The enumerator had been unable to complete enumeration for this household because she felt threatened by the household member she spoke to (she later filed a police report for attempted assault). The CLA said she was going to attempt the enumeration since the case was selected for the Dependent QA anyway. While there, the CLA was able to complete enumeration for two housing units that both had the same street address. The respondent provided information for his own household and for his brother who lived in the second house on the property. The respondent indicated that his brother was disabled and unable to answer the door.

One of the units the CLA checked was located on a dairy farm. The original status for this unit was “nonresidential.” The CLA asked one of the employees to show her where the unit was. The unit was located above one of the dairy’s processing facilities. The CLA did not attempt to speak with anyone inside the unit. She simply verified the nonresidential status. The CLA should have confirmed with someone that the unit above the processing plant was not residential. It could be living quarters for employees of the dairy.

Another unit had an original status of “delete” because the enumerator said she could not locate the unit. When we went out to find the unit, we found it very easily. The house had a mailbox that was clearly marked with the address. We found the respondent at home. The respondent remembered speaking to the enumerator and even described the enumerator accurately. The respondent indicated that the unit was vacant on Census Day. The CLA assumed that either she had made a mistake when transcribing the information from the enumerator questionnaire to the D-951, or that the enumerator made a mistake when filling out the questionnaire. The CLA was going to double-check her transcription, but she stated that if it was an enumerator error, she would have to fail the case.

The CLA was unable to complete the Dependent QA checks for the other two units we visited. We found no one home at one of them, and the CLA left a notice of visit. The last unit had an original status of “vacant,” but we were unable to locate the housing unit. The CLA had a respondent name and phone number so she called and left a message.

#### IV. OPELOUSAS LCO

While visiting the Opelousas LCO, I spent time with the AMFO from Opelousas as well as several other AMFOs who were visiting from surrounding LCOs. All of the AMFOs I spoke with agreed that the D-951 was the best QA tool they had used so far. They felt it was very informative and simple to use. Their only suggestion was that there should be space on the form for the CL to transcribe the household address.

The AMFO informed me of a situation that occurred in the field with duplicate addresses. If there is a duplicate address in the address binder and the address is for one of the “new” addresses (i.e., not a vacant/delete unit from NRFU), the enumerators would enumerate the first instance of the address and delete the duplicate. If the deleted case was also selected for the Dependent QA, the CL/CLA would have to fail the case because they would find the unit occupied in the QA check. In these instances, the AMFO said she told the CLs and CLAs to verify that the case was actually a duplicate and, if so, then pass the case. This is an appropriate action for these types of cases.

This LCO was also facing challenges associated with the implementation of the "911" system. The state of Louisiana was instituting the 911 Emergency system at the same time as production for various census operations. This created many obstacles for the LCO because the 911 implementation caused many addresses to change many times in the middle of or between census operations. So, an enumerator might locate an address in one operation, but by the time they return for the next operation, the address has changed. Although this created a difficult situation for the LCO, the AMFO felt they dealt with it well and had performed a quality enumeration despite the complications.

## V. OPELOUSAS DEPENDENT QA OBSERVATION

During my visit to Opelousas, I observed two CLs performing the Dependent QA checks. The first CL worked in the urban area of Lafayette, Louisiana. We attempted contact with seven housing units. We were able to complete the check for only four of the seven households. Two of the other three housing units were for sale. The CL recorded the telephone numbers from the "For Sale" signs and said she would call those numbers later to check the status of those units. We found no one home at one unit. The CL left notices of visit on all units where she couldn't make contact with a knowledgeable respondent.

The four units the CL was able to contact were all located in an apartment complex. The CL spoke to the apartment manager who was able to provide adequate information for all four units. The CL attempted to locate the units to speak with a household member, but the organization of the apartment complex was confusing. There were two entrances to the complex and the units in each entrance were identically numbered. Apparently, each entrance was a different street address, but the unit numbers within the two addresses were the same. The CL was not sure of the street addresses for the two entrances, so she felt more secure getting answers from the apartment manager.

This CL performed her duties well and appeared to be very conscientious about her work. However, she did misunderstand one portion of the procedures for the Dependent QA. She was performing the check on both occupied and vacant/delete units -- she was checking all asterisked cases instead of first checking the status. The procedures state that the Dependent QA is for vacant/delete units only. As with the LCO in Palm Springs, this CL also interpreted the procedures as requiring the Dependent QA for 50 cases or two weeks, whichever came first.

The second CL I observed worked in a more rural area. This CL interpreted and implemented all Dependent QA procedures correctly. The CL indicated that they were finding that nearly half of their CIFU cases were occupied units. This surprised him because he was told that most of the workload for CIFU were going to be vacant/delete units from NRFU. I was also surprised at the high number of occupied units.

During this observation, we performed the Dependent QA check for five housing units. The CL was able to verify the status of all five units. All of the units were vacant units, but the CL was very conscientious about contacting neighbors. He also ran into the mail delivery person while we were out in the field and the mail delivery person was able to confirm the status of one unit we were checking. The CL stated that one benefit of the rural areas is that the residents tend to be more knowledgeable of the housing units around them.

## **VI. CONTACTS**

Any questions about this document can be directed to Jennifer Reichert at 301-457-4298.

cc:

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